

SITTERSON
DOUGHERTY
ASTONE
ESPOSITO

FREE PLANET



In the wake of a grueling revolutionary war, the planet Lutheria has declared itself the first completely free planet in human history.

As Lutheria roils from the impacts of a punitive embargo and dramatic economic restructuring, the Freedom Guard attempts to smuggle in food from neighboring Dumuzid. But increasing numbers of citizens, disillusioned with the Lutheran government, have begun to take matters into their own hands.

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FREE PLANET #11. Digital edition. April 2026.
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NET



**A SHARED
COMMITMENT TO THE
PUBLIC GOOD
IS WHAT ENSURES OUR
FREEDOM.**

While most Lutheran polei strove to organize themselves along communitarian principles, extant property claims and the imperative of inter-polis trade rendered a market economy--built upon the formerly Alliance-backed drachma--an ineluctable necessity.

**TRAITORS
ONLY UNDERSTAND
ONE THING.**

Intending to mitigate the worst effects of market-related shocks, the Civilian Council instituted wide-ranging price controls on necessities (clothing, medicine, fuel, and, crucially, food), with the Lutheran state functioning as a monopsonistic procurer and distributor.



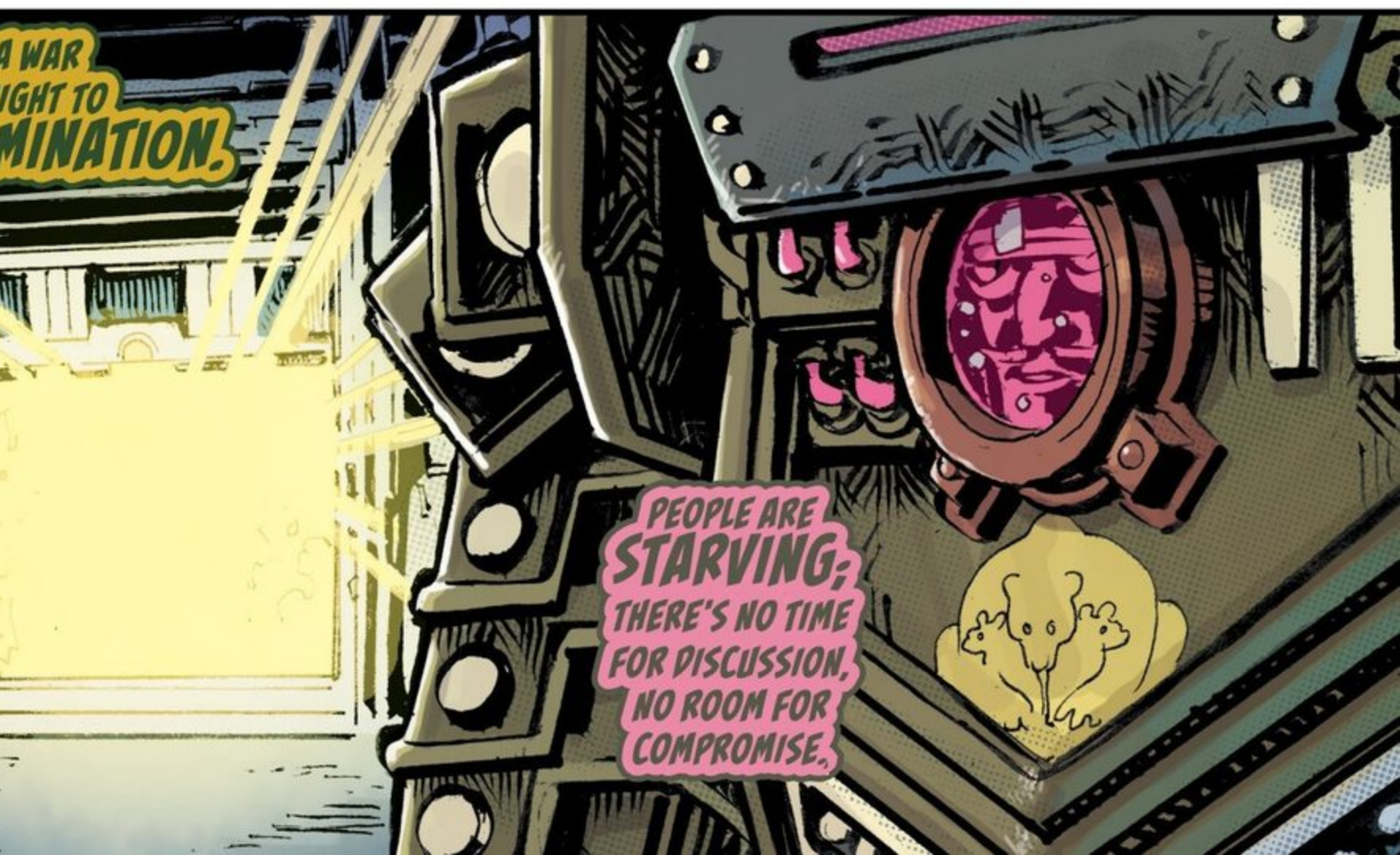
Though successful at distributing rations, polei with significant tracts of terraformed land balked; the scheme was perceived as benefitting urban areas at the expense of less populous ones, eo ipso diminishing their purchasing power and, consequently, quality of life.



**WE WON A WAR
FOR OUR RIGHT TO
SELF-DETERMINATION.**



**PEOPLE ARE
STARVING;
THERE'S NO TIME
FOR DISCUSSION,
NO ROOM FOR
COMPROMISE.**



The persistence of a market economy resulted in other undesirable but prognosticable follow-on effects: Though eradicating Alliance wealth inequality had been one of the Revolution's primary goals, Lutheran polei soon began to re-stratify along economic lines.

However, the recrudescence of class distinctions was tempered by a confluence of factors (e.g., memories of Revolution-era expropriation, the enthusiastically embraced MacLiu clan system, civic pride and commitment), giving rise to Lutheran evergetism.

Though profit was permitted, there existed an expectation of munificence, such as through the establishment of festivals and clan temples. In recompense, benefactors received special honors and, crucially, the privilege of retaining their wealth.

AS GHROTTDALE SPEAKER, I'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH DEFENDING OUR FREEDOM, OUR LIVELIHOODS, OUR AUTONOMY.

WE HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF FLOUTING THE LUTHERIAN DREAM BUT WE KNOW THE TRUTH: WE EMBODY IT!

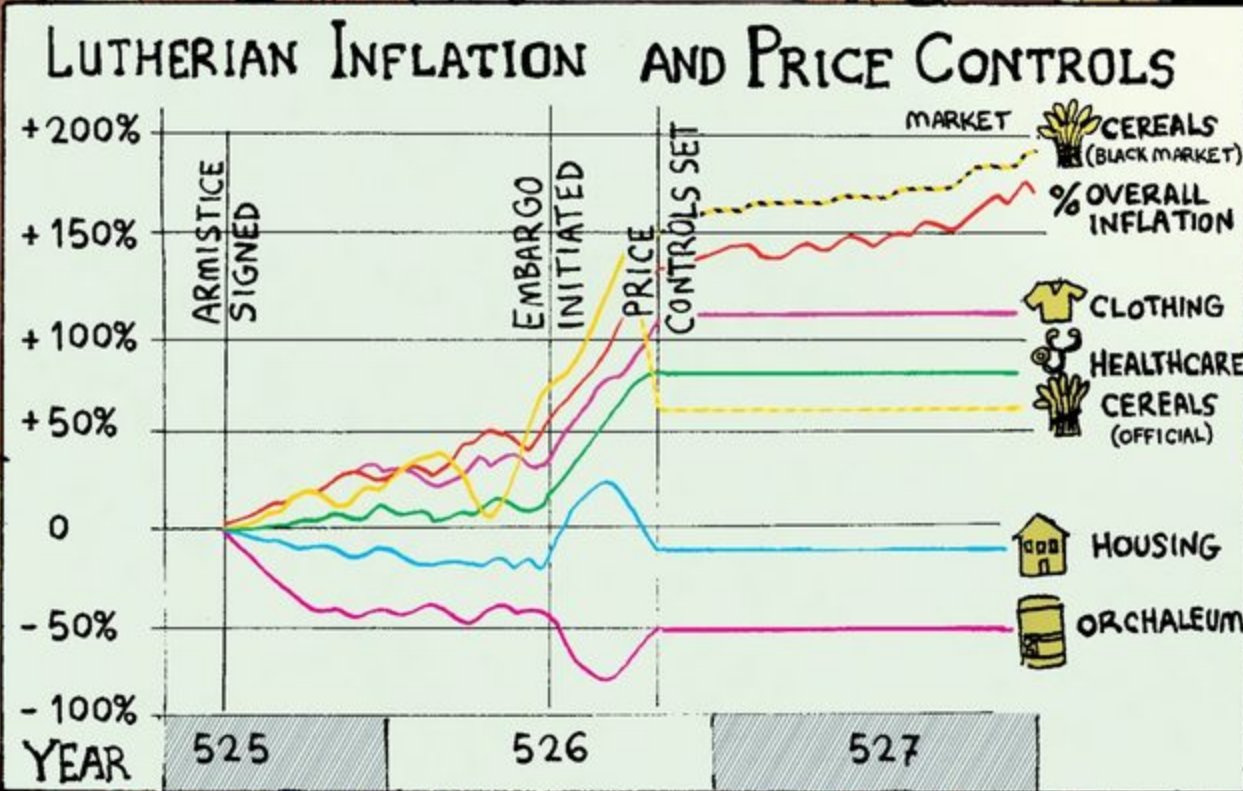
REMEMBER GRACCHON: OUR SACRED DUTY IS NOT TO THE LUTHERIAN STATE OR THE RICH, URBAN POLEI; IT IS TO EACH OTHER.

MY HUSBAND, MY SONS; THEY FOUGHT, KILLED AND DIED FOR OUR RIGHT TO REALIZE THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR.

AS PROUD LUTHERIANS, HOW CAN WE DO ANY LESS NOW?

This phenomenon was accentuated in the frumentary sphere, as wealthy benefactors as well as the polis collectively could realize significant benefit through the circumvention of price controls and the robust commercialization of cereals and other foodstuffs.

Not infrequently, however, these purely honorific titles took on more functional aspects. In some instances, polei went so far as granting charismatic benefactors formal roles and responsibilities, though they remained--ostensibly-- beholden to the boule.



TRUST ME, COMPANERE: THE DISGUISES ARE NECESSARY.

YOUR MISSION AIMS ARE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE DUMUZID INSURGENCY WHILE REMAINING UNDETECTED.

INTERPLANETARY TRAFFIC IS CONSISTENT ENOUGH THAT MOOKIE'S KESTREL IS UNLIKELY TO DRAW UNDUE ATTENTION ON ITS APPROACH.

Following ratification of the Interplanetary Development Alliance's Guiding Principles on Dispersion Populations, indigenous Dumuzians were freed from institutionalized exploitation but confined to one of several corporate-sponsored preserves.

Following generations of systematic abuse, indigenous Dumuzians were ostensibly free. That freedom was only conferred, however, within the rigid confines of the "prez"; with a dearth of services, support and infrastructure; and under constant surveillance.

INDIGENOUS PRESERVE

A JIANULT CULTURAL, POLITICAL, & ECONOMIC PROJECT

INCIDENTAL DETECTION AT THE JIANULT INDIGENOUS PRESERVE RENDEZVOUS POINT, HOWEVER, CONSTITUTES A SALIENT AND PERSISTENT RISK.

Though intended to pacify the indigenous Dumuzians, nipping any potential unrest in the bud, Far Star Security's overbearing presence in the sprawling preserves had the opposite effect, prompting contumacy to fester amid the planet's primeval forests.

SO WE JUST IMAGINED A SHIP TOUCHING DOWN? THAT IT?

WHY ARE YOU OUT HERE IN THE PREZ ANYWAY?

CRATER!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

SAME AS ALWAYS.

GAME IT OUT IF WE'RE CAUGHT: WE ROT IN A BLACK SITE WHILE FAR STAR TERRORIZES THE PREZ, LUTHERIA STARVES, AND THE ALLIANCE LOSES ITS PATIENCE.

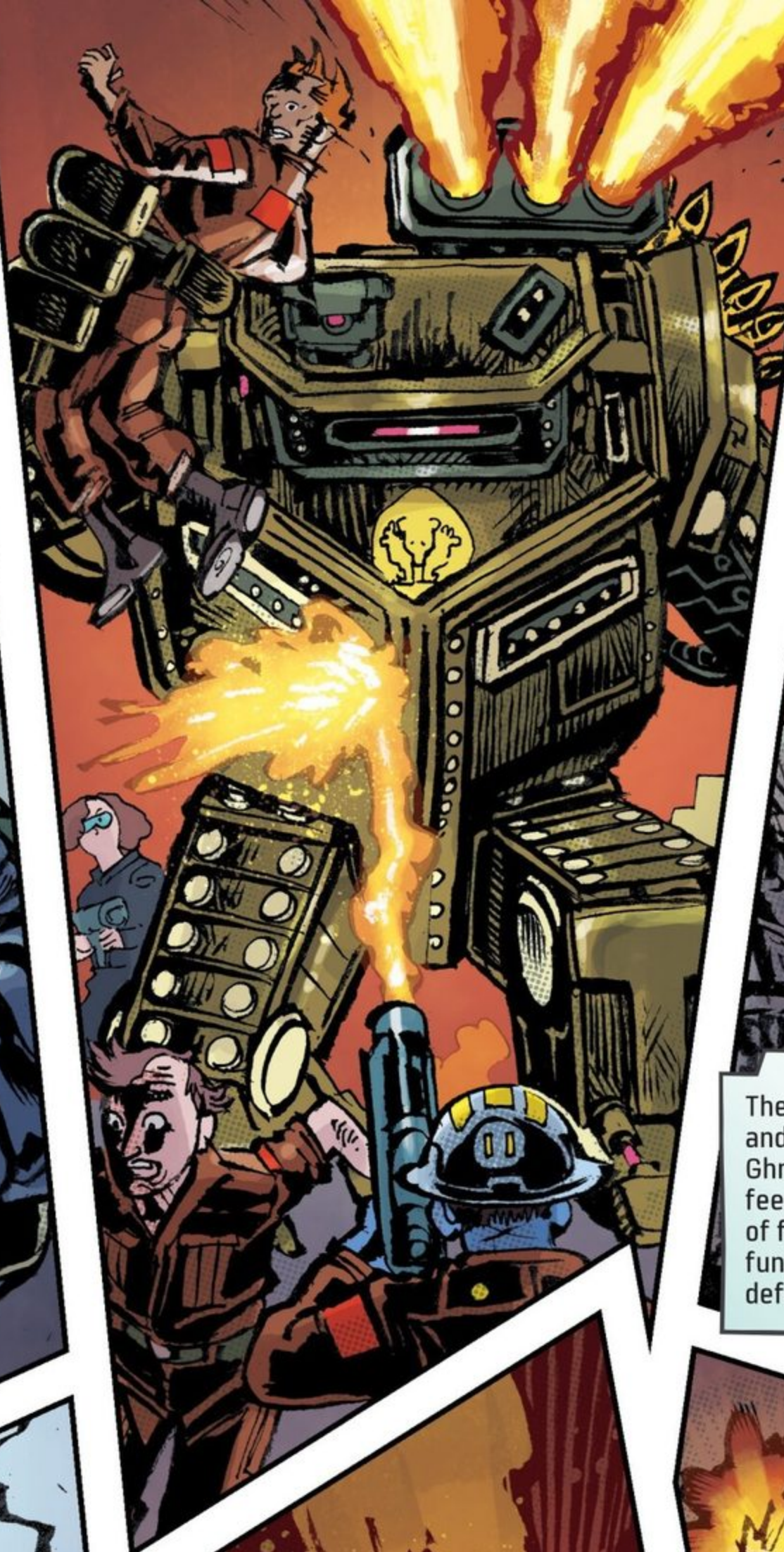
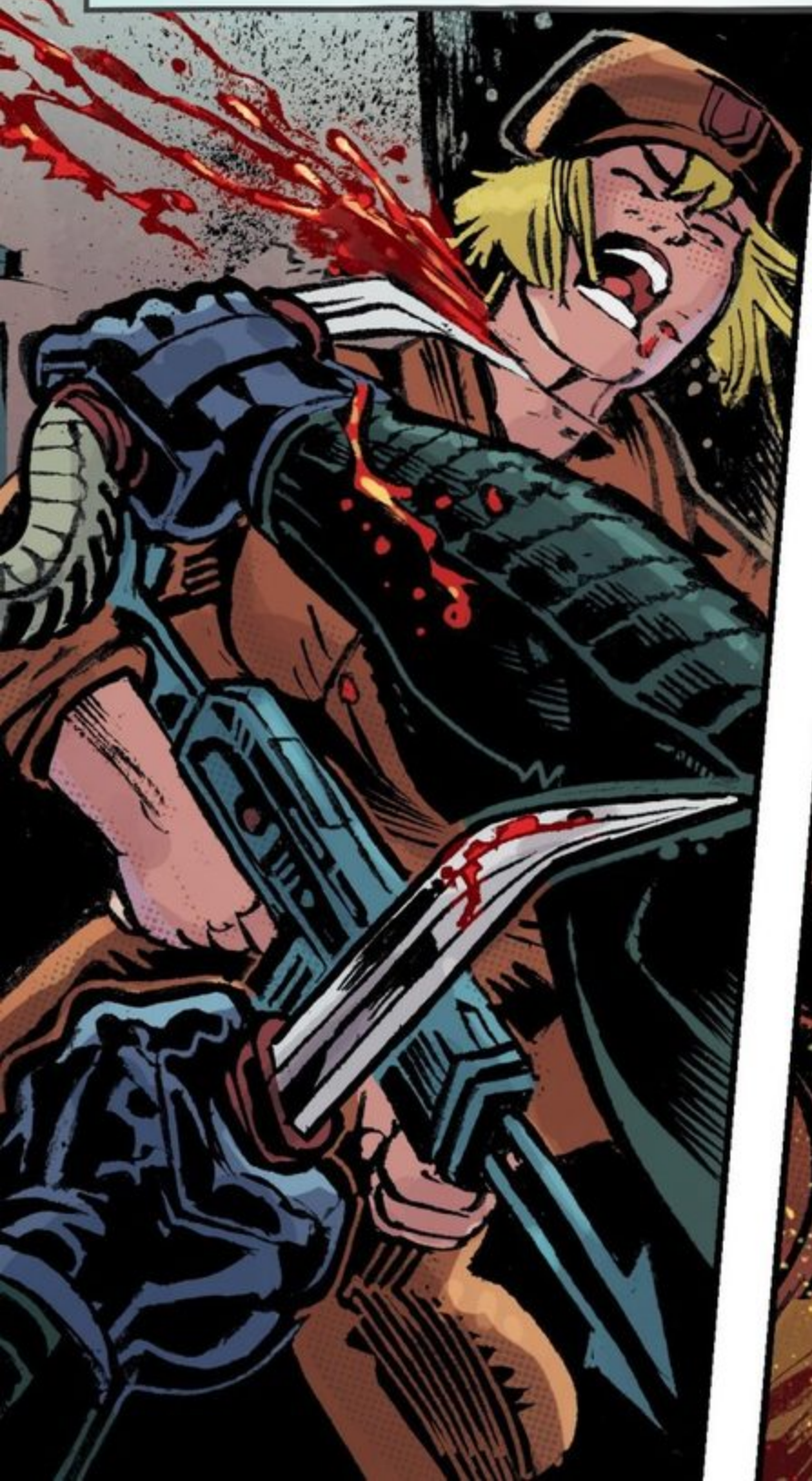
WE'RE AUTHORIZED FOR RECON ONLY. HOW DO THINGS PLAY IF WE START MURDERING ALLIANCE CITIZENS ON FOREIGN SOIL?

WE'RE SOLDIERS, NOT ASSASSINS.

The Ghrotdale Secession was ideologically fraught, driven by the very communitarian values the Revolutionary Government hoped to inculcate in the Lutheran citizenry, as exemplified by Speaker Ines Lebatha's euergetic utilization of blackmarket cereal profits.



As with other attempted secessions--and in recognition of polis autonomy--the Civilian Council exhibited considerable restraint, only activating the Freedom Guard and surrounding Civil Guard units after Ghrotdale's supersession of adjacent polis territory.



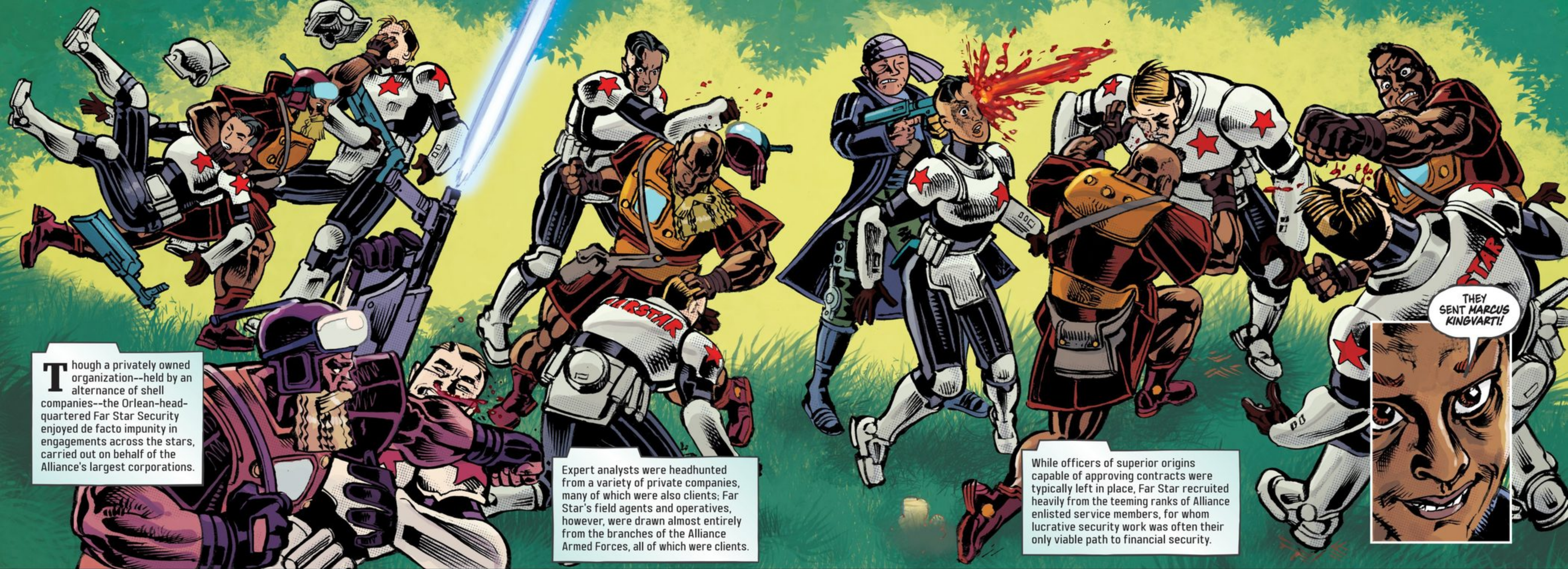
The drastic differential between official and blackmarket cereal prices prompted Ghrotdale to repudiate its obligation to feed other polei, electing to use the sale of formerly state-levied sustenance to fund civic services and, crucially, defense investment.



Like all battles fought for freedom, the combat in Ghrotdale was kinetic and high-tempo; credit for the avoidance of an extended siege is generally given to Victor MacLiu's infiltration plans and Basil Usmansen's deployment of overwhelming ordnance.







Though a privately owned organization—held by an alternance of shell companies—the Orlean-headquartered Far Star Security enjoyed de facto impunity in engagements across the stars, carried out on behalf of the Alliance's largest corporations.

Expert analysts were headhunted from a variety of private companies, many of which were also clients; Far Star's field agents and operatives, however, were drawn almost entirely from the branches of the Alliance Armed Forces, all of which were clients.

While officers of superior origins capable of approving contracts were typically left in place, Far Star recruited heavily from the teeming ranks of Alliance enlisted service members, for whom lucrative security work was often their only viable path to financial security.



Galvanized by the Lutheran example and rumors of Jackson Crater's role on the Freedom Guard, the Dumuzid labor movement—including even the staid, official chapter of the Industrial Labors of the Galaxy—effloresced in size, support, and, most significantly, militancy.



In need of room for staging actions, warehousing ordnance, and housing swelling ranks of wanted fugitives, militant unionists flocked to the preserves, where they discovered that their concerns were imbricated with those of the indigenous Dumuzians.

The early years of Quadros diplomacy were arduous and tentative, as humanity--whether Lutheran, Alliance affiliated or Orouran--grappled with the Quadros conception of the universe: a concatenation of events unmoored from linear time.



This foundational difference in perception fomented significant confusion, exemplified by the murky distinction between the Quadros race and its sociopolitical structure, the Hive, and the Quadros' universally idiosyncratic utilization of grammatical tenses.

AMBASSADOR, YOU STARTLED ME.

I WAS JUST...LOST IN THOUGHT.

YES. HUMANS ALL STRUGGLED WITH THE SAME QUESTION:

TO WHAT WILL I BE LOYAL?

The latter proved particularly perplexing when taken in concert with the Quadros' purported prognosticative abilities and humanity's commitment to causality; whether the Quadros predicted future events or caused them would prove a ferociously debated topic.

I DON'T--WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

LIKE ALL IMPOSSIBLE QUESTIONS...

...IT IS ANSWERED BY TIME.





WHAT ARE YOU, NUTS? SOMEONE COULD HEAR!

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE TIME.



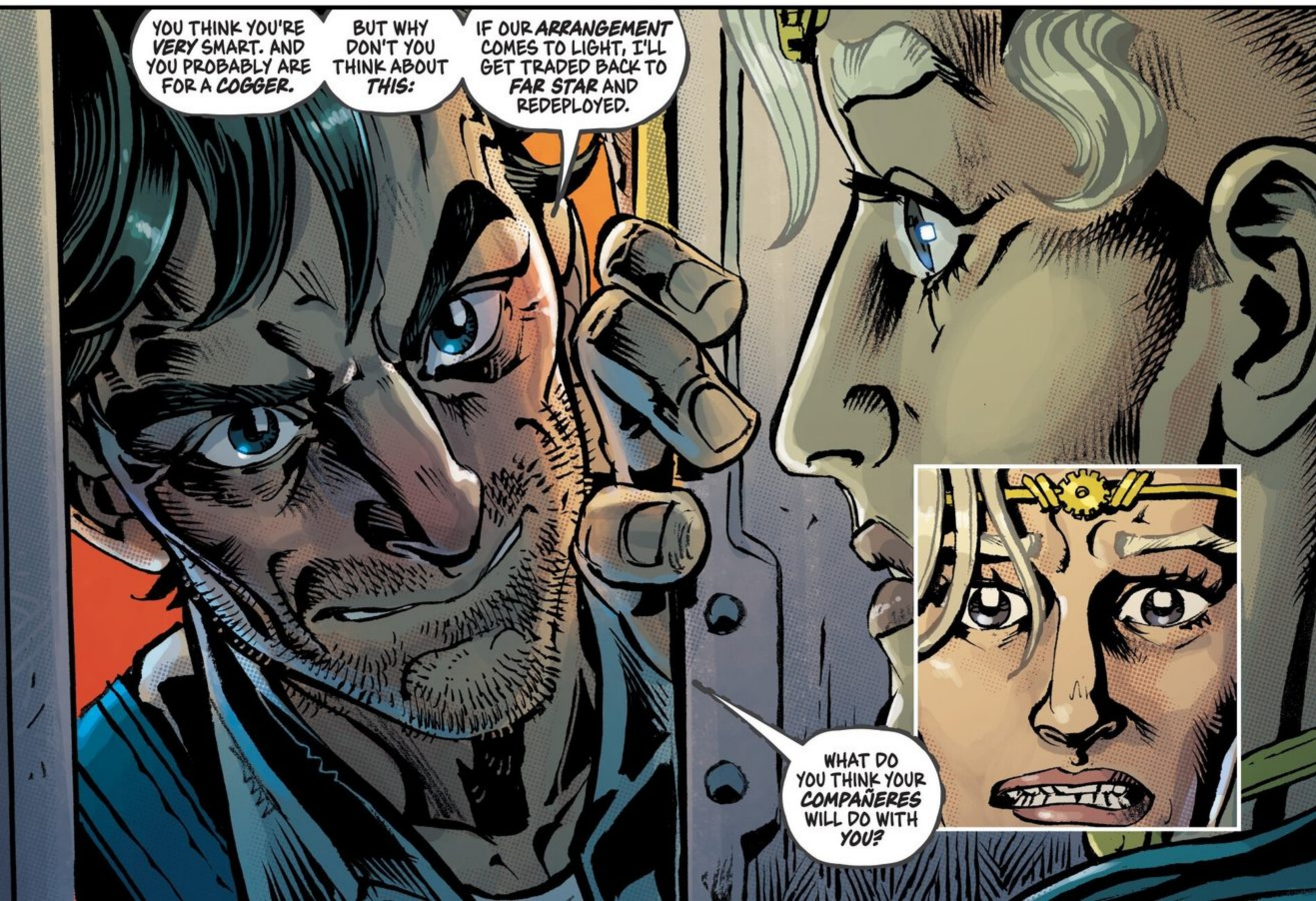
HIS HOLINESS HAS TO PREPARE FOR CALIBRAMAS, DOESN'T HE?

YES, OF COURSE. WE WERE JUST FINISHING UP.



THAT'S STRANGE. BECAUSE CALIBRAMAS WAS LAST WEEK.

WHO ARE YOU ACTUALLY TALKING TO IN THERE?



YOU THINK YOU'RE VERY SMART. AND YOU PROBABLY ARE FOR A COGGER.

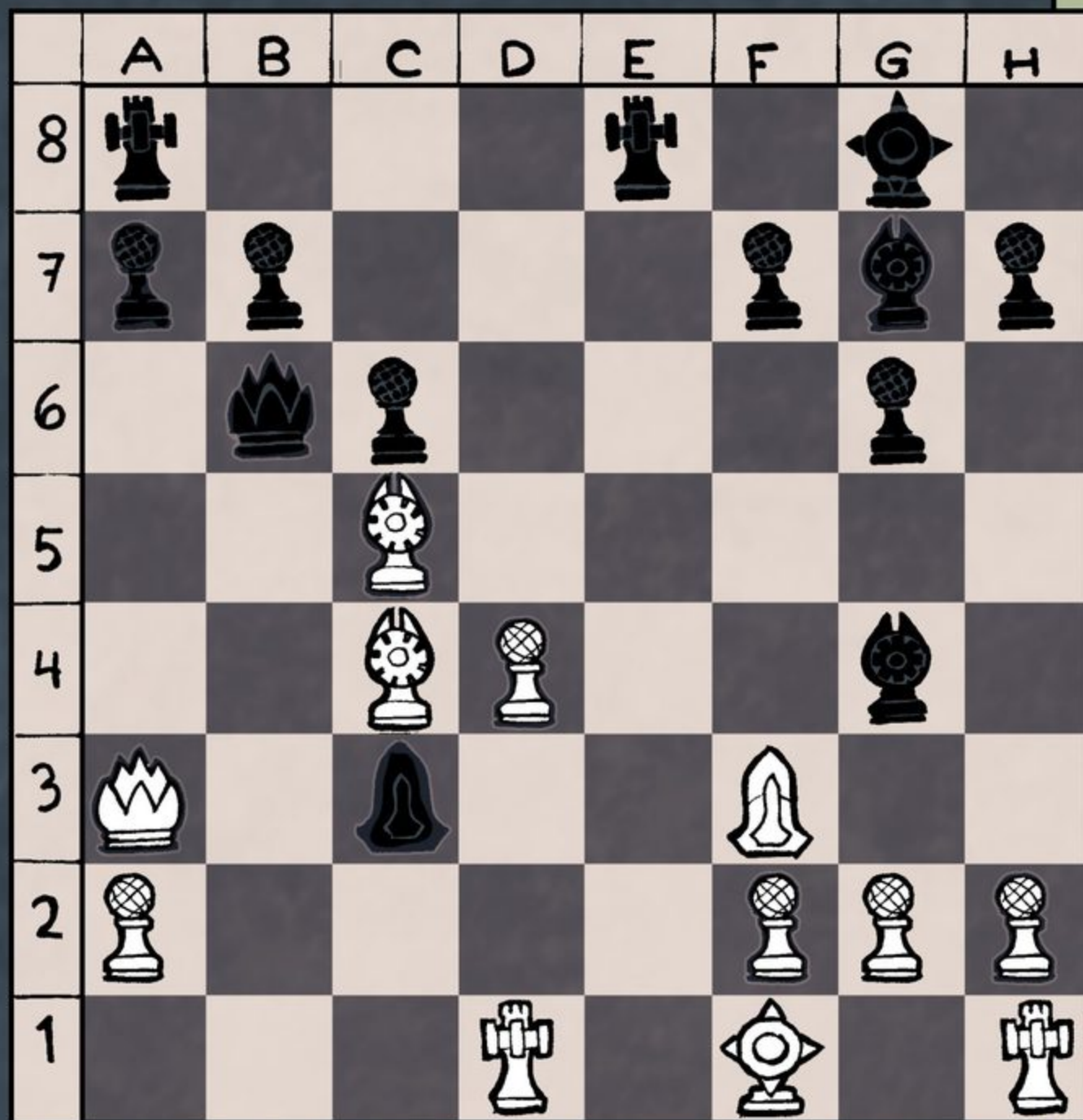
BUT WHY DON'T YOU THINK ABOUT THIS:

IF OUR ARRANGEMENT COMES TO LIGHT, I'LL GET TRADED BACK TO FAR STAR AND REDEPLOYED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR COMPANERES WILL DO WITH YOU?







17	...Be6	30	Nxe1: Bd5
18	Bxb6: Bxc4+	31	Nf3: Ne4
19	Kg1: Ne2+	32	Qb8: b5
20	Kf1: Nxd4+	33	h4: h5
21	Kg1: Ne2+	34	Ne5: Kg7
22	Kf1: Nc3+	35	Kg1: Bc5+
23	Kg1: axb6	36	Kf1: Ng3+
24	Qb4: Ra4	37	Ke1: Bb4+
25	Qxb6: Nxd1	38	Kd1: Bb3+
26	h3: Rxa2	39	Kc1: Ne2+
27	Kh2: Nxf2	40	Kb1: Nc3+
28	Re1: Rxe1	41	Kc1: Rc2#
29	Qd8+: Bf8		

Though known by more appellations than there are worlds in the human diaspora, chess endures across Alliance and Imperial space alike, a testament to commonalities persisting across the millennia and light years of mankind's estrangement.



WHY DID HE SEND YOU ONLY TO ABANDON YOUR FLEET?

THE GREAT SUN'S MANDATE WAS CLEAR: PREPARE LUTHERIA TO JOIN THE EMPIRE.

BISHOP TO E6.

Despite numerous claims of independent innovation, recent archaeological discoveries--and, notably, the recovery of a checkered board from a ghost ark--indicate a strong likelihood that chess traveled alongside humanity on its celestial exodus.

But while chess endured without substantial alteration, time and distance catalyzed the development of distinct play styles, from the Alliance's prioritization of tactics and aesthetics to the Orourans' rigorously strategic approach.

WHEN VICTOR OUTMANEUVERED YOU.

THE GREAT SUN'S VISION IS KEEN, HIS PLAN MULTIFACETED.

HE HAS ENTRUSTED ME WITH MULTIPLE PATHS, INCLUDING THOSE SHOULD CAPTURE BECOME UNAVOIDABLE.

LEFT YOUR QUEEN HANGING.

WHY IS THIS PART OF HIS PLAN? WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT?

Following the Revolution, chess was not spared attempts to foster a distinct Lutheran culture. Yet, despite best efforts--and reflecting similar cases--the foundational thinking and logic of Lutheran chess continued to emanate from the same Alliance font.

DIFFERENT TACTICS TO ACHIEVE THE SAME GOAL.



THEN WHY DID YOU DEViate FROM YOUR ORDERS?

Freedom is always circumscribed, granted in proportion to expertise and responsibility.

Is a child free to make their own decisions?
A farmer free to pilot a warship?

How much agony springs from the choices of the ill-prepared?
From authority untethered from responsibility?

From freedom devoid of knowledge, of wisdom?

From tactics unleavened by strategy?

BISHOP TAKES C4.

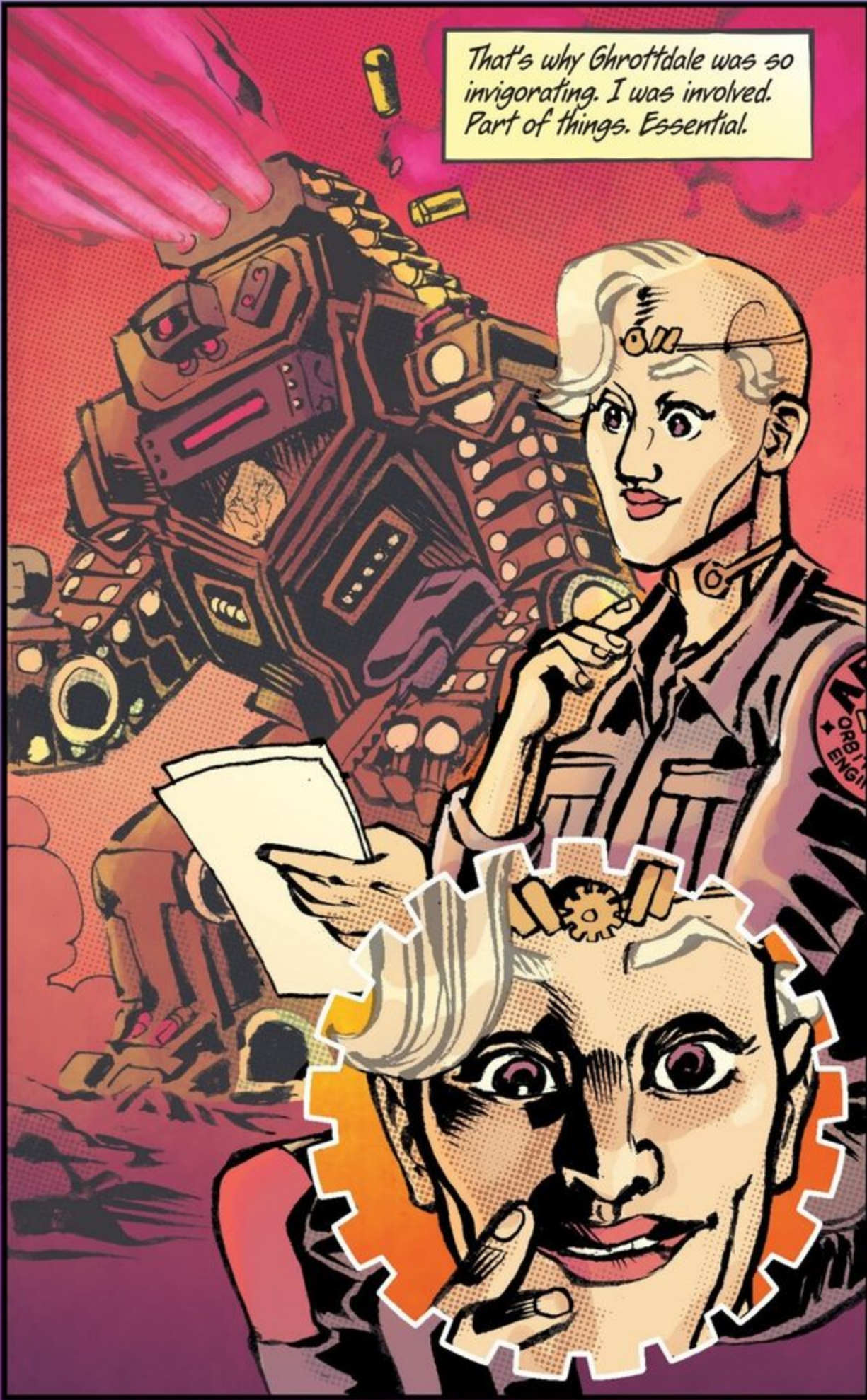


CHECK.





It haunts me. All my promise, all my hopes and dreams have come down to this: Life lived through a pink porthole.



That's why Ghrotdale was so invigorating. I was involved. Part of things. Essential.



SHRING

GOT A MINUTE?

I CAN'T STOP THINKING. ABOUT GARTNAIT.

AND I REALIZED I...I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT SURROKO. DEFINITELY NOT TRUE SURROKO.

ONES I'VE KNOWN AREN'T SO... TRADITIONAL. AND I JUST--

HOUSECATS.



And it's all because of you, Hora. Without your guidance, your kindness, your understanding, I'd never have been able to accept my new role.



Things change: what matters to us, our loyalties and commitments, even our place in His creation. And in response, we're free to choose...

...how it is that we change, grow and improve.



TAME AND OBEIENT. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

NO, OF COURSE NOT.

GOOD.



ME NEITHER.

FWEHA.



WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR... DALLIANCE, I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

ALONE. IT'S... IT'S PRIVATE.



FWEHA, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!



IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. I WAS CLEANING IT AND IT JUST BROKE...



THEY'RE GOING TO KICK ME OUT, I KNOW IT.

THEY'LL HAVE TO KICK ME OUT TOO THEN!

A confluence of factors--a majority male population, corporate refusal to relocate minors, lower birthrates among the technician class, etc.--rendered children scarcer upon pre-Revolution 'Aides than on Alliance planets of similar size and demography.



BUT WE'LL BE BACK ON THE STREET. I CAN'T--

HORA, YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND. THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY DUMB CANDLEHOLDER.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ABBOT?

MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIM TOO.

Owing to their scarcity and scant economic potential, care of 'Aides' youngest devolved upon the Teomekhean Church, which established parochial schools and opened its doors to orphans and the abandoned children of parents too indigent to provide for them.



DON'T WORRY. WE'LL FIGURE THIS OUT.

TOGETHER.



The enduring notional joy of independence notwithstanding, as the revolutionary afterglow faded, life upon free Lutheria proved punishing, particularly for those burdened with the contentious governance and precarious defense of their beleaguered world.

WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING.

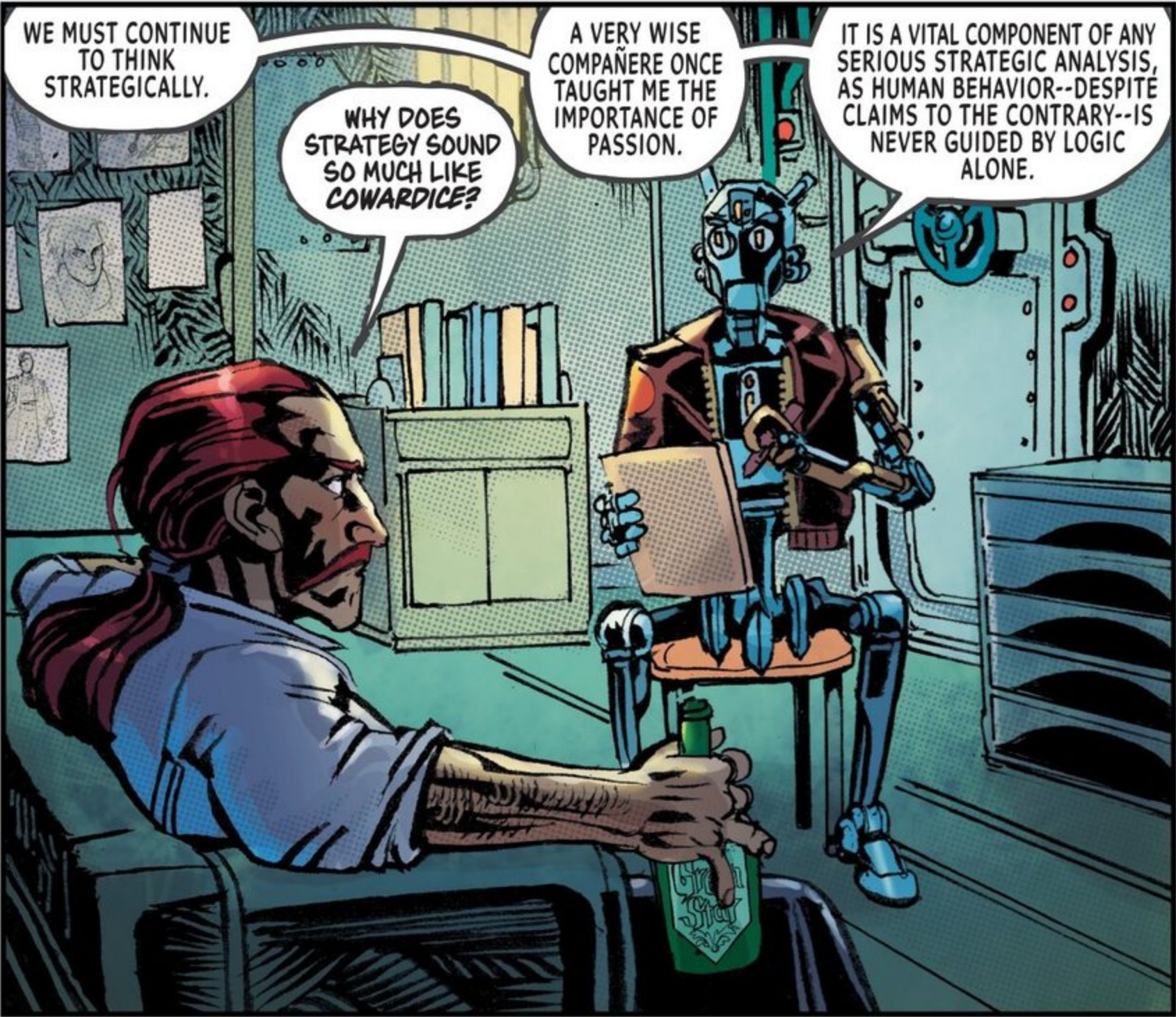
CRUSHED BY IDA'S BOOT, UNDER FAR STAR SURVEILLANCE, AND STARVING LUTHERIA JUST TURNS AWAY.

This trend was exacerbated aboard the Aegis, where the Freedom Guard--faced with onerous responsibilities, a dearth of authority, and profound isolation--sought solace where they could, pursuing hobbies, artistic endeavors, and other diversions.



IT AIN'T RIGHT, TALUN.

I KNOW THE DUMUZID MISSION WAS DIFFICULT. BUT PATIENCE AND CAREFUL TIMING REMAIN ESSENTIAL.



WE MUST CONTINUE TO THINK STRATEGICALLY.

WHY DOES STRATEGY SOUND SO MUCH LIKE COWARDICE?

A VERY WISE COMPANERE ONCE TAUGHT ME THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSION.

IT IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF ANY SERIOUS STRATEGIC ANALYSIS, AS HUMAN BEHAVIOR--DESPITE CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY--IS NEVER GUIDED BY LOGIC ALONE.



THREATENED BY THE MYOPIC DICTATES OF COLD, RIGID LOGIC, HUMANS LIBERATE THEMSELVES THROUGH THEIR MORALS, THEIR BELIEFS, THEIR IDEALS AND DESIRES.



JACKSON, I HAVE NEVER MET ANYONE LIKE YOU.

SOMEONE SO PASSIONATE, BRAVE AND FREE...



CONCERNING THE REVOLUTIONARY IN ART: LUTHERIAN AESTHETIC PRACTICE

BY DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

From its inception, Lutheran society has been centered around a clear yet arduous imperative: the creation of a completely free planet. While the bulk of writing about Lutheran history has focused on the forging of novel economic and governance frameworks, these efforts were concomitant with far-reaching transformations across all facets of Lutheran life, including the successful institution of the MacLiu clan system, sweeping dietary adjustments, and even radical inflections in artistic practice.

TRADITIONAL SURROKO ART

Across the vast majority of Interplanetary Development Alliance members, indigenous artistic practice is deeply marginalized; it is treated, at best, as mere kitsch or camp. In this respect as well, Lutheria stands as an outlier vis-à-vis the profound and extensive cultural influence of Surroko art. While other rediscovered planets were rapidly inundated by Alliance colonists, diplomats, and missionaries propagating Alliance aesthetics, Lutheria—then ‘Aides—was largely disregarded prior to the discovery of orchaleum, at which point it was subjected to a monomaniacal focus on extraction.

As a result, Surroko art and aesthetics permeated the artistic vacuum of ‘Aides society, with humans of all planetary origins wearing woven woolen garments, collecting kuttuks and other leather and horn items, celebrating Surroko holidays, and even adopting Surroko paint patterns as decorative elements, including—on rare occasions—as tattoos. In the time following the Revolution, this syncretic process accelerated due to the identification of the Surroko as having remained largely uncorrupted by Alliance aesthetics.



Though it originated as the start of the Surroko’s most violent season, the Spring Festival and its polychromatic decorations received wide adoption.

ORAL TRADITION

Nowhere is this syncretism displayed more clearly than in the Lutheran passion for oratory.

While the Surroko possessed a distinct writing system, it was primarily the domain of Flametenders and other religious figures, who would record their tribe’s history upon massive stone pillars within monumental ceremonial centers. There, and during the Surroko’s nomadic wanderings, their primary means of communication was speech.

In the Lutheran context, the Surroko tradition of Tribal Moots, eloquent chiefs, and consensus seeking commingled with an Alliance preference for bombast, flamboyance, and rhetoric, resulting in a culture deeply committed to the spoken word. This manifests itself at every level of Lutheran society, from the interminable sessions of the Global Council and speeches marking every major holiday or occurrence, to the theatrical competitions held in every polis clan house and the impassioned and often florid exhortations peppering everyday communications.

ALLIANCE FOLK ART

While Lutheria held no interest to the Alliance’s monied, high culture, its low culture was carried to the planet in the luggage of extraction workers, technicians, and tardy revolutionaries alike in the form of notebooks, paint, and, notably, musical instruments. In the wake of the Revolution, vibrant and fiercely idiosyncratic local music milieux took root, efflorescing in the fertile creative soil of a people gifted with leisure time and the freedom to enjoy it.

LUTHERIAN STREET ART

Perhaps taking influence from Jackson Crater’s KOMBINAT upon sister planet Dumuzid, restive elements upon then-’Aides began to express their grievances through graffiti. With the outbreak of the Revolution, this practice intensified, playing a significant role in boosting rebel morale, diminishing Alliance confidence, and codifying the Lutheran worldview through the ubiquity of revolutionary slogans.



While most Alliance art stood accused of counterrevolutionary ideology, a special ferocity was reserved for the Orthodox Teomekhean church and its remaining outposts.

Following the revolution, and once again availing themselves of a theretofore unknown surfeit of free time, Lutherians of all backgrounds began painting upon the largest canvases available: Lutheran buildings. Murals offered a suffering populace an opportunity to depict the world they wished to create, while also serving to recontextualize Alliance architecture and design through the application of an art form closely identified with Lutheria as well as the Aten System more broadly. Within months, however, Lutheran street art shifted from purely revolutionary and aspirational to harshly censorious of the governing regime.

TRACTS AND PAMPHLETS

Artistic practice is central to Lutheran culture due not only to the importance of art to human life broadly, but for the essential role played by Oliver Gracchon’s “Freedom’s Tyrant” tracts. Censored but widely available during Alliance rule, following the revolution, Gracchon’s work became ubiquitous, even serving as textbooks for the planet’s severely under-resourced schools.

Gracchon’s texts were soon joined by a glut of other printed material, much of it pertaining to Lutheria’s planetary project: the cultivation of true and undeniable freedom. While many of these tracts were content to dig deeply into Gracchon’s work, fleshing out fully that which the stoic writer commander had only intimated, an increasing number of authors blazed more individual paths. These writers utilized their unfettered freedom of expression to not only disagree with the practical application of Gracchon’s ideals but even—in some cases—the ideals themselves.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

NEXT ISSUE

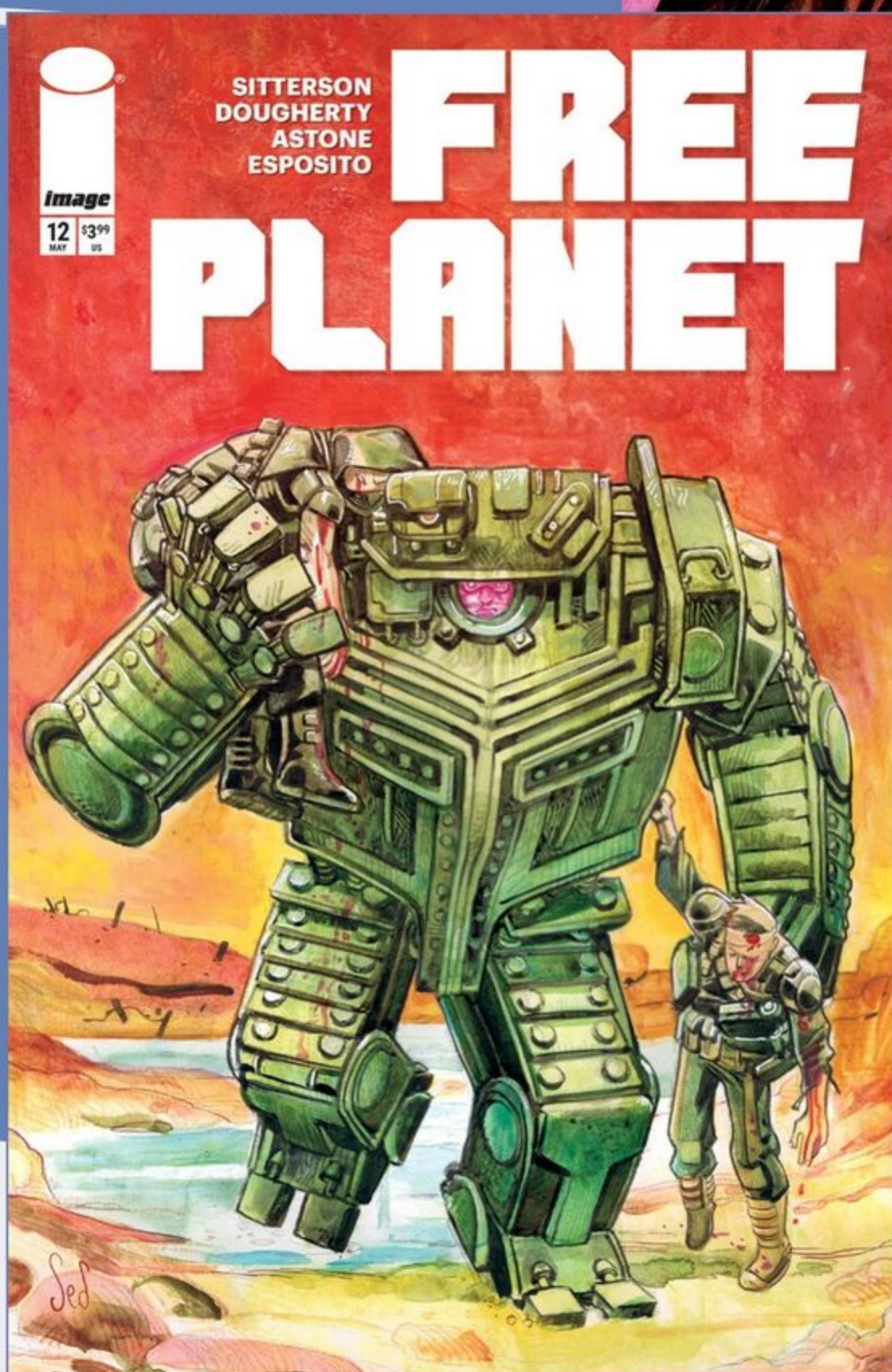


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FREE PLANET NET



Cover A



Cover B

*Our problems can't be
solved with ideology.*

A geopolitical
space opera by
AUBREY SITTERSON
and **JED DOUGHERTY**

"Brings shades of the
cosmic imagination of Jack
Vance, Jack Kirby, and
Samuel Delany and Howard
Chaykin's great lost *Empire*."

—**Jonathan Lethem**
(*The Fortress of Solitude*,
Motherless Brooklyn)

FREE PLANET

**VOL
1**

"Rich, intricate
worldbuilding that
is equal parts *Dune*,
Claremont and
Saga while being
wholly original."

—**Robert Kirkman**
(*Invincible*,
The Walking Dead)

"A great comic book series,
a synergy of text and image
possessed with a density of
vision that shames most any
other attempt at legitimate
space opera in comics."

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(*American Flagg*, *Time²*)



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If Destruction Be Our Lot

Matthew ROSENBERG
Mark Elijah ROSENBERG
Andy MACDONALD
Francesco SEGALA
Hassan OTSMANE-ELHAOU



An epic adventure about finding your purpose,
defying extinction, and *really* lonely robots.

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The lives of a professional killer and a high school teacher are bound by a terrifying, mysterious force. Worlds collide in this new series from **Lorenzo De Felici** (*Void Rivals*, *Kroma*).

RED ROOTS



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APRIL 2026

SPAWN VOID RIVALS **GEIGER**
RECKLESS **EAST OF WEST** **I KILL GIANTS**
THE WALKING DEAD *I HATE FAIRYLAND*
THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH **SEX CRIMINALS**
KILLADELPHIA **BATTLE CHASERS**
SAVAGE DRAGON *THE SACRIFICERS* **BLACK SCIENCE** *THE WICKED + THE DIVINE*
MONSTRESS CHEW *SWEET PAPRIKA*
NOCTERRA
MOONSTRUCK *UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* **REDCOAT** **BUG WARS**
DESCENDER **PAPER GIRLS** *THE OLD GUARD*
INVINCIBLE *WANTED* **BITTER ROOT**
STRAY DOGS *WHAT'S THE FURTHEST PLACE FROM HERE* **SNOTGIRL**
SAGA *FERAL* **WITCHBLADE** *FRIDAY*
CRIMINAL *EIGHT BILLION GENIES*
FIRE POWER **GIDEON FALLS** **DIE**
SPECTATORS *LITTLE MONSTERS*
RAT QUEENS **RADIANT BLACK**
ICE CREAM MAN **DECORUM** *BITCH PLANET*
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we change, grow and improve.”

—*Basil Usmansen*

